

DRIED FIGS

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DRIED FIGS

PRODUCTION

Figs and fig products are among Turkey's traditional agricultural products. Although fig production may show large variations according to the annual climatic conditions, Turkey ranks as the world's largest supplier of fresh and dried figs. Turkey leads the field both in terms of fresh fig production and its processed forms in the world to the extent that she realizes 24.7 % of the world's fresh fig production and over half of the world's dried fig production.

Although different types of fig varieties are grown throughout Turkey, the "Sari lop" variety with its large size, sweet, fleshy, light colored character and soft skin is the main variety for dried figs. This variety, which is preferred by most of the world's countries for its quality, is produced only in the river basins of the Küçük and Büyük Menderes Rivers in the Aegean Region.

Turkish Dried Fig Production By Years

Years	Dried Fig Production (Ton)
2000	49,001
2001	48,028
2002	52,462
2003	54,571
2004	55,631
2005	56,327
2006	60,393
2007	48,012

Source: International Nut and Dried Fruit Council Foundation (INC)

Fig production is realized principally on small family farms in Aydin and Izmir provinces over a large area. This is a family business, as it requires an intensive human power in the field when collecting the figs from trees, selecting, sorting, screening and further processing the figs into different forms.

Turkish dried figs are grown under natural conditions, harvested and sun dried on racks under controlled conditions. They are graded, stored in hygienic plastic foodgrade crates, washed with running warm water, and packed in hygienic conditions following the strict rules of internationally accepted quality control systems. Today, most of the dried fig exporter companies have been awarded with the ISO and HACCP system certificates.

Regarding the safety of production, before being processed in the factories figs are subject to fumigation, washing and UV light treatment. After processing, figs acquire export names such as layer, protoben, pulled, lerida, locuum, garland, macaroni, baglama, cukulata, and umbrella based on their shapes.

Drying improves both storage life and the food value of the fig. Fresh figs contain some 80 % water and 12 % sugar, however, when dried, the sugar content rises to 50 %

The production of figs and fig products has been observed to increase considerably parallel with the expanding demand of international markets for healthy foods.

Thus, the production figures are expected to display a strong increasing tendency in the near future.

EXPORT

Turkey has the largest share in world dried fig exports as a consequence of its monopoly in production. It has been recorded that approximately 60 % of dried figs subject to world trade were exported from Turkey.

Turkish Dried Fig Exports By Year

Years	Quantity (Tons)	Value (\$ US 1,000)
1993	36,522	65,345
1994	46,634	72,975
1995	42,738	79,994
1996	35,972	69,334
1997	33,997	62,000
1998	37,253	71,630
1999	40,222	70,277
2000	36,759	59,802
2001	39,284	66,216
2002	35,935	72,375
2003	42,095	78,064
2004	49,073	85,596
2005	52,594	105,076
2006	54,237	120,697
2007	40,101	150,527

Source: Undersecretariat For Foreign Trade

As can be seen from the figures, the export volume of Turkish dried figs amounted to the 150,2 million Dollars in 2007, which is its highest point in history.

Turkish Dried Fig Exports To Top-Ten Countries By Years (Value (V): \$ US, Quantity (Q): Kg)

	COUNTRY	2006		2007	
		Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value
1.	Germany	8,665,496	19,603,563	7,078,867	29,069,480
2.	France	9,304,750	21,530,360	6,540,614	24,460,136
3.	Italy	5,613,322	12,861,213	2,982,261	14,168,485
4.	Switzerland	2,337,032	6,378,206	1,854,720	9,502,996
5.	Russian Fed.	2,533,766	4,215,650	3,011,557	6,685,323
6.	Sweden	1,239,759	3,105,091	1,229,035	5,820,858
7.	U.K	1,870,717	4,285,405	1,895,671	5,817,992

8.	Spain	1,950,467	4,340,381	1,228,852	5,780,691
9.	The Netherlands	1,997,358	4,227,815	1,461,539	5,321,192
10.	Australia	1,158,201	2,846,739	1,122,811	3,932,920
	Others	17,566,018	37,302,578	11,694,718	39,967,432
	TOTAL	54,236,886	120,697,001	40,100,645	150,527,505

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute

Note: Countries are ranked according to export value for Turkey in 2007

Although Turkey provides dried figs to the five continents of the world, over 80 % of exports are directed to EU countries. About half of the exports were directed to 3 countries, namely Germany, France and Italy in 2007.

Turkish dried figs are the favorite items for Christmas in the Christian world. Also, they are keenly sought after by the Moslems especially during Ramadan as well as during the periods of traditional American and Jewish holidays such as Succoth, Hanukkah and Passover.

It is expected that, as their nutritional and medicinal value is understood, Turkish dried fig exports will hopefully increase further in the future, even in the markets where figs are more recent phenomena.